

the littlest king

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the littlest king

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Summary

Dream is smiling at him as even *he* claps, grinning really wide.

“You’re king, buddy,” he says into Tommy’s ear. “For real.”

(or, Tommy is crowned king. He's five. Things are about to get real.)

Notes

See the end of the work for [notes](#)

Today is a *big day*.

Tommy knows it's a big day because Dream is in his room. Dream's in his room a lot normally anyhow, but today the maids are cleaning him up really nice and making him sit in the chair across from the big gold mirror. It's been a bit weird lately— lots of lessons, lots of sitting and kicking his feet, but today seems to be the culmination of it all. He wants to be running around, playing with his wooden sword and fighting with Sapnap until he lets him run down the hallway without his shoes, but the maids tell him he can't. They sit him in a big tug and scrub him until his skin is bright red and burning, comb through his hair until it lies flat on his head. He doesn't even have time to play with the bubbles, and when he tries he gets scolded.

Dream comes in when he's wrapped up in a big fluffy towel, playing keep-away with the maids.

"Tommy," he says, voice firm. Tommy skids to a stop in front of him, hair still dripping into his eyes, and giggles. Dream reaches out and he ducks away from his hands, giggling again. It's too soon that he's caught, Dream's hands firm on his shoulders as he kneels in front of him.

"Tommy," he says again. "That's enough. Today's a big day, okay?"

"Big day," Tommy agrees breathlessly, nodding despite the fact it's the first he's heard of it.

"You have to be really good today," Dream says, and he's not smiling when he looks at Tommy. Tommy, in turn, feels his own smile drop. "You have to be serious, and not fidget."

"Why?" Tommy asks, and Dream leans forward, scooping him up in one go. Tommy laughs again, squirming in his grip but not able to escape. Dream plants him on the chair in front of his mirror and gestures with one hand, not taking his eyes off Tommy. A maid appears, and for a minute his vision goes dark as she puts a towel on his head and scrubs aggressively, drying his hair off until it poofs and curls, bright gold. "Why? Why? Why—"

"Because today," Dream says, "you're going to become king."

"I am king," Tommy says, a little confused. He's always been king. Dream's always told him that he has a job and a duty, and he'll learn more about it when he's older.

"You are," Dream says, nodding a little. He comes back into sight, and now he's smiling. It's not a happy smile, though— it's tinged with a little bit of sadness, maybe? Tommy frowns, unsure. "But today it's official. Today, you get to show the whole city you're king."

"Why?" Tommy asks. Doesn't the city *know* he's king? Everyone knows he's king.

"Because they need a reminder," Dream says. He backs away now, and the maids descend like a flock of carrion birds over a carcass, fluttering and chittering over him as they start to dress him in loose, flowy clothes with lots of gold stitching and comb his hair into something presentable. Tommy's used to this part, although it's never been this intense— he sits very still

when the ladies tell him to and they dab red onto his cheeks, pinching his nose and telling him *good job* when he shuts his eyes so they can dust gold onto his eyelids.

Through it all, Dream is there. In his room, sitting on Tommy's bed and watching him with an intense look. It makes him keep his shoulders straight and his mouth in a firm line, although occasionally he flashes Dream a brilliant grin in the mirror. Dream just clasps his hands together harder, but he does smile back.

"Today's a big day," he tells Tommy, holding his hand as they walk down the big hallway together. It's the one with huge flowing curtains and intricate red designs across the walls. There are huge mirrors across from the windows, and Tommy stares at their reflections as they walk. Dream is looking down at him, swinging their hands between them gently. "Today a lot of people are going to be looking at you, because we're going to officially announce your reign. Do you know what that means?"

"I'm king," Tommy says, and Dream nods. A bolt of excitement shoots through him— he was right. He *loves* being right. He especially loves when him being right makes Dream smile with teeth.

"Exactly," Dream says. "And being king is a big responsibility, but I trust you can handle it."

"I can do it," Tommy assures him, puffing up his chest. Some of the necklaces and charms attached to him clink when he does, and he skips once or twice, too excited to keep the movement in his body. He feels like *bees*. Buzz buzz. "I can do it!"

"I know you can," Dream says, and his hand in Tommy's stops him from skipping forward too far. "But— Tommy, stop."

Tommy does not stop. His slippers are soft and warm and the floor seems good to slip-n-slide on, and he's full of bees, and—

Dream jerks him backwards by the hand, a twinge of pain rocketing up his shoulder. Tommy stumbles back, opening his mouth to complain or cry, but he stops at the expression on Dream's face. "*Tommy*," he says, and now he sounds angry.

His eyes sting. But— Tommy can't cry. He'll ruin all the gold on his face.

"Sorry," he says.

"You need to be serious today," Dream says, holding Tommy's hand up way above his head where it almost hurts, pulling on his muscles. "I know we didn't have time to prepare, so. Today, of all days, you *have* to listen to me."

"But I'm the king," Tommy whispers. People are supposed to listen to him, not Dream.

"And I'm your brother," Dream fires back. "That trumps kingship."

"Nuh-uh."

"Yeah-huh."

“Liar!”

“I’m not lying,” Dream says, leaning down and with a conspiratorial whisper, scowls at him. “I could *take away* you being king, if you wanted. Is that what you want?”

Oh, no. Tommy shakes his head, frantic. He *likes* being king. He likes the maids and the toys and the people fawning over him as Dream holds him on his hip, playing with his hair and smiling at him with wide mouths and glittering eyes. Dream lowers his arm until it feels normal again. He squeezes Tommy’s hand, once, and sighs. Then he reaches up and cups Tommy’s cheek gently, a touch that he leans into, trying his best not to cry.

He sniffls anyway.

“Don’t cry,” Dream says, smoothing his thumb under Tommy’s eye. “I’m sorry. Today is just—stressful. There’s a lot going on. I just need you to be good today, Tommy. I need you to be perfect.”

“I can be perfect,” Tommy whispers.

“Can you?” Dream asks. “Just for today. I promise tomorrow you can be as bad and obnoxious as you want. Today, though—”

“I’ll be good,” Tommy says, then realizes he interrupted, which is definitely not good. “Sorry,” he says again, casting his eyes down. Dream’s thumb passes under his eye again, red-hot against his skin. Outside, the sun is high in the sky and the wind passes through the curtains, almost obscuring them both from view in the mirror.

“It’s okay,” Dream promises. He sighs, and his hand drops from Tommy’s face. “I know it’s hard. It’s hard for me too. But you’re going to be amazing, aren’t you? It’ll be worth it.”

“Yeah,” Tommy says. “I will be.”

“Prime, I hope so,” Dream mutters under his breath, straightening up. “Prime. Stupid conference, stupid—forcing my hand early, *really*? Alright. Come on, we’re going to be late—and remember. Be *good*. ”

Tommy is quiet as they keep walking. Through the mirror hallway and into the west wing, out of the west wing and into the center of the palace. The ostentatiousness of his life is lost on him, the gold and finery background noise to the thoughts running through his head. He’s Tommy Innes-Innit, and he’s five years old and he’s king, but today is a special day because he’s full of bees and the bees must be put away until after everything important happens.

They arrive at a door Tommy knows well—the throne room. He’s been here a few times, but never for long. They keep him away for some reason.

Today, though, the soldiers at the doors barely hesitate. Dream squeezes his hand once and then the big doors are swinging open on their huge hinges, revealing the throne room and its grand high ceiling. That’s not what Tommy focuses on, though—no, he barely looks at the stone pillars and cold tile floor and tapestries on the walls, banners hanging from the ceiling.

He barely notices the thick scent of flowers and fruit from the arrangements hanging from every corner of the room.

All he sees are the people. Hundreds of them, all turning their heads in unison as the big doors swing open. Hundreds of pairs of eyes landing on him, staring, watching. Waiting.

Tommy wants to hide. He wants to turn tail and *run*, bury his face in Dream's thigh and wait for them all to stop looking. But when he turns, Dream's hand is firm in his and keeps him away.

"You're okay," he murmurs, and then they start walking.

There's a path in the middle of all the people, lined with a green carpet with flower petals strewn across it. They crunch under his feet as they walk, Dream by his side as they make their way down the steps and into the hall proper. Tommy makes sure his back is stick-straight, half due to his terror, half due to his lessons. Dream stands tall, and when Tommy chances a glance up at him, his eyes are looking straight ahead, fixed on the throne at the end of the room.

The walk seems to take forever. People bow and curtsy as they pass, and some more flowers are tossed at his feet. No one speaks.

At the end of the carpet is the throne, a big chair that Tommy's never been allowed to sit in before. They make their way up the flat stairs that lead up to the chair, and standing before it is one of the men from the church Tommy goes to every weekend with Dream. He's old, with a wrinkly face that is kind of scary and makes Tommy flinch backwards slightly into Dream's hold. But his brother doesn't do anything— in fact, he nudges Tommy closer to the man, then lets go of his hand entirely and leaves him alone. He steps away and Tommy desperately looks over at him as a cold fear sinks over his heart, and he can feel the eyes on his back. Dream just looks at him though, with a weird little smile, and nods.

Tommy can do this. He's a big kid. And he's the king.

So he looks up at the wrinkly old priest and stays quiet as the man drones on, talking about *loyalty* and *commitment* and *love* and *Prime*. He talks about a lot of things and eventually turns to Tommy, asking him to repeat a bunch of it.

Tommy thinks he does good. He stutters only once on a hard word, but the priest whispers it to him again and he says it nice and loud. When he glances over his shoulder, the people are still all looking at him, eyes wide and glittering. Some of them look sad. Some look happy. Most are neutral.

When he turns back to the priest, he sees it in him, too— the skin around his eyes is flat, even though he's smiling. Like there's a secret he knows that Tommy isn't allowed to hear. He frowns, but finishes repeating the words he was told to anyway, because Dream told him to be good.

"And," the priest says, "Will you to your power cause fairness and justice, with mercy, to be executed by your judgments?"

Tommy blinks. What? He glances to the side, and Dream gives a brief nod.

“I will,” he says quickly, and based on the priest’s face, he’s got it right. They go through a couple more rounds of question and answer, and Tommy says yes to all of them.

He promises. He promises he’ll be a good king, a righteous one, a fair one. *He promises he can be good.*

When it’s over, the priest has him turn around and face the crowd. They’re staring at him in silence as the priest places a heavy crown on his head—much heavier than his normal one, and he knows it’s made of gold without looking. Dream is finally with him again and some part of him cries out in relief as his brother takes his hand, helping him walk backwards until he gets to sit in the chair.

It’s so big. It nearly swallows him whole, but he manages to get up onto the seat and sit. His feet don’t touch the ground and he resists the urge to swing them. (He gives in a little bit, kicking them back against the fuzzy velvet and feeling it brush along his calves. It’s soft, and comforting, like a plush toy from his room. But Dream frowns at him, so he quickly stops moving and sits still.)

The priest hands him two heavy golden things— a big... stick? And an orb.

Oooh, Tommy *loves* orbs.

He wants to roll this one down the hallway like he does with his marbles, but that’s clearly not what it’s for. So he just holds it as all the people in the hall stand up and start clapping really loud. The priest says something—Dream is smiling at him as even *he* claps, grinning really wide. When Tommy blinks, he leans in.

“You’re king, buddy,” he says into Tommy’s ear. “For real.”

“Really?” Tommy breathes. Dream nods again, and Tommy’s eyes sparkle. He can feel his cheeks get hot and he grins, showing his teeth as he looks out at the sea of people in front of him. They all blur together into one mishmash of color and sound, and it’s overwhelming, but...

But that’s his people, he thinks. Because he’s king now. He’s sitting on the throne and he’s wearing the crown.

“You’re going to be amazing,” Dream whispers into his ear, and Tommy—

Tommy can’t help but believe him.

End Notes

wrote this real quick bc.... IDK i just wanted. perspective. a little snippet of what it was like before everything...

for context, tommy is crowned the day of the diamond conference that philza holds :) five years after the cataclysm!!!! (this is a political slight). i love the cata world so much you guys have NO idea :D :D :D its my baby<3

remember to kudos and comment :) and SUBSCRIBE to my ao3!!!

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